

22R Chrows

26 December 1962

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT : Surfacing the R-12

REFERENCE : Draft Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense from DNRO, dated 19 December 1962, subject: same as above and Proposed Draft Statement

NRO DECLASSIFICATION/RELEASE INSTRUCTIONS ON FILE

1. We have reviewed Dr. Charyk's memorandum to the Secretary of Defense and the proposed draft public statement on the surfacing of the R-12. If a decision is reached that one must proceed with and surface the R-12 development, then there is little quarrel with the proposed draft statement. It is probably about as good a statement as could be prepared. However, we believe that this statement will in no way conceal the true purpose of the X-21 - A-12 development; and as Dr. Charyk himself admits, the association of Lockheed, high secrecy and the reconnaissance program makes any attempt to conceal the true purpose of this development almost ridiculous. Also, the risk of compromising the very small radar cross section capability is considerably increased due to the inevitable comparison of the merits of the R-12 versus the R-70 and the probable disclosure of the R-12 anti-radar design techniques. Therefore, regardless of the statement issued one must face the fact that by such a statement the basic objectives of the A-12 program will be compromised.

2. In his proposal for surfacing the RX, Dr. Charyk states it is not possible to keep the existence of the OXCART program a secret forever. Obviously, this is true, but the real question revolves upon the time and manner in which revelation will occur. We certainly kept the U-2 under wraps for a long time. It is true that the present circumstances are less favorable to such prolonged secrecy. However, so far we have been very fortunate in keeping

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this development secret, and we have no reason to believe that we cannot continue the present situation for some time, barring a critical accident. In any case, there is quite a different situation when there is an accidental disclosure of a new type of aircraft which people speculate as being for reconnaissance purposes and the open publication by the U. S. Government that they are developing such a vehicle. The latter situation is liable to lead to any number of official statements that we have no intention of using this during peacetime and thereby inhibit our ability to use the vehicle for covert intelligence purposes. I personally feel that the surfacing as proposed here would lead to a situation in which, except under the most dire emergency, the highest levels in Government would never be in a position to authorize the use of the vehicle over the Soviet Union.

3. I believe that the recent experiences in Cuba have graphically demonstrated the absolute need for the U. S. to have the capability of flying a vehicle of the A-12 nature over the Soviet Union. Satellite photography will never supply the kind of intelligence which is needed under these circumstances. I believe, therefore, that you as DCI should make it absolutely clear to the highest authority that this capability should not be jeopardized without the strongest type of justification.

4. I am personally not convinced that such justification exists. In fact, the strongest justification for the RX is primarily political in nature. The DOD has got itself in difficulty with Congress, the AF and the aerospace industry due to the B-70 program. The present RX version is about the last mile in an attempt to provide an alternative to this program and thereby justify the B-70 cancellation. The proposed RX has few, if any, characteristics which cannot be satisfied by other systems. If one really desired to obtain high-quality photographic intelligence with a high degree of reliability in a crisis, pre-strike situation, then the A-12 is a much more reliable system for obtaining this information than the R-12. The increased penetration capability resulting from the very low radar cross section of the A-12 would probably more than offset the advantages gained by having 2 people [redacted] This may be an oversimplification of the capabilities of the R-12, but nevertheless, it is really not clear that this presents a major improvement in our pre-strike reconnaissance capabilities. The post-strike capabilities are similarly questionable since most of the systems do not involve direct readout.

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and therefore the A-12 can be expected to provide almost as good data. Thus, I think you should make it very clear that you question in the National good the wisdom of jeopardizing a very critical intelligence capability to provide very marginal advantages or to ameliorate a difficult political problem. In this latter connection I personally have very great doubts as to whether the R-12 will really solve the political questions since we do not believe it will satisfy either the Congress or the aerospace industry. The recent decision to cancel SKYBOLT in favor of POLARIS will give LAC a boost. They also recently won the C 141 (Jet Transport) prime contracts. Since they are now the biggest DOD contractor, cancelling the B-70 for the A-12 under such circumstances will surely cause at least as much trouble with industry as just cancelling the B-70 outright. This will be further complicated by the fact that it will be very difficult to subcontract any of the A-12 work to new contractors because of the highly specialized skills and equipment required to handle titanium. In the National good it might be much better to just drag on the B-70 than to toss the A-12 to the wolves.

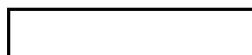
5. Furthermore, I do not believe that Dr. Charyk's assumption that the OXCART will leak at least in the near future is necessarily sound. This same statement could have been made a year ago; yet we have still maintained security. I believe that we stand a reasonable chance of keeping this development at least under some semblance of control through maybe the first year or more of operational life of the A-12. The longer that this can be maintained, the greater will be the delay in the Soviets attaining a counter to this system. If it were decided to go ahead with the R-12, then I believe this should be done by the AF [] but this would mean that no announcement of the decision could be made and there would be, therefore, no solution to the DOD's B-70 political problem. While this in the long run will never be completely satisfactory, it at least might buy us some appreciable time in terms of Soviet defenses or political inhibitions.

6. In summary, I believe that this issue is of such vital importance to the National security that it cannot be dealt with in terms of political necessity. I believe that it is absolutely essential that this issue be made crystal clear to the President and that one should

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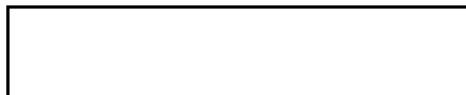
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not allow such a critical National asset to be sacrificed to rescue the Defense Department from a difficult situation.



HERBERT SCOVILLE, JR.
Deputy Director
(Research)

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cc: DDCI
Exec. Director

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